

PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

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IT IS UNLIKELY that major influenza outbreaks will occur in California during the 1964-65 disease season. As in other inter-epidemic years, however, focal outbreaks might be expected.

During 1963-64, influenza A2 was widely prevalent along the West Coast. Although influenza A commonly occurs in two to three-year cycles, it would seem, in the face of the extensive 1962-63 outbreak and the California involvement the following year, that a major outbreak would be unlikely this year.

A nationwide epidemic of influenza B was last observed in the United States during 1961-62. During 1963-64, influenza B in epidemic proportions was observed in Japan. Possibilities that the Japanese influenza B epidemics might herald outbreaks in California during the coming year cannot be completely dismissed.

It seems unlikely, however, in view of the relatively rare occurrence of major epidemics of type B, that California would experience more than scattered, limited outbreaks this season.

Since its introduction, influenza vaccine has been shown in repeated trials to give substantial protection—60 to 80 per cent—against the epidemic disease. Vaccination should begin as soon as practicable after September 1 and ideally should be completed by mid-December. In any case a two-week delay in the development of antibodies may be expected.

The department has begun a study of the occurrence of cancer among Japanese citizens of the State, part of a coordinated project being conducted in Japan, Hawaii and California, and supported by the National Cancer Institute.

Two cancer sites, stomach and lung, were selected because Japanese people have an increased susceptibility to cancer of the stomach, while cancer of the lung occurs less frequently among Japanese in Japan than among the people of the Western countries. Purpose of the study is to determine whether the occurrence of these cancers change as Japanese people adapt to other cultural surroundings.

Interviews will be sought in 1,500 households and among members 35 years of age and older. Information about dietary and other habits that may have some relationship to the occurrence of cancer will be requested. The study is limited to the

collection of interview information. No examinations or laboratory tests are involved.

Last year there were 650 drownings in California, 489 of which were associated with recreational activities or occurred in recreational areas. The other 161 were the result of suicides, bathtub accidents, or other mishaps.

Of particular concern are the 100 preventable drownings that took place in home swimming pools. More than half of these deaths occurred to children under the age of five with 24 under one year of age. About 75 per cent of them were reported from three counties—Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino. This is probably due to the large population in these areas and the large number of home pools.

Drownings in home pools could be avoided by simple preventive measures, such as: Enclosing pools with a fence and self-closing gate which cannot be opened by small children; having rescue equipment available at poolside; having all members of the family learn the technique of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. In addition, children should be watched continuously when they are in the pool area.

Since the department some months ago began routine testing of hospital meals as part of its radiological surveillance program, the levels of radioactivity found have been far below those at which consideration should be given to protective action from the standpoint of health.

The samples, which are gathered from all areas of the State, are analyzed for their content of various biologically important radioactive isotopes, including Strontium 90, Cesium 137 and Radium 226.

We have had to reemphasize again this summer the great danger in using pitchers and other containers which contain copper, cadmium, or related heavy metals for the preparation of acid drinks.

Two outbreaks of illness caused by the drinking of soft drinks occurred recently. In the first episode 23 youngsters became severely ill shortly after drinking pink lemonade which was stored in a cadmium plated container. In the second occurrence, five children became ill after drinking a fruit drink which had been prepared and stored in a silver over copper pitcher.